



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

During a Winter Storm: Winter Driving

- Listen to the radio for weather and road conditions.
- Select alternate routes before you leave in case your preferred route isn't passable.
- Try not to travel alone during a storm. Two or three people are better than one because they can help each other. Travel with another car if possible.
- Make sure someone knows where you are going, when you are leaving, the time you expect to arrive, and your expected route.
- Always fill your gas tank before entering open country, even for short distances. You will be less likely to be stranded from running out of gas. In case you are stranded by the storm, you will have enough fuel to run the motor and heat the car.
- Keep windows clear of snow and ice.
- When driving on ice and snow, your driving habits must change accordingly:
 - Starts must be slower and stops be planned much more in advance.
 - Turns cannot be taken as fast as in the summer. Even tire chains on ice take as much as four times the distance as regular tires on dry pavement.
 - When the car does go into a skid, you should turn the steering wheel to steer in the direction of the skid and remove all pressure from the gas pedal. As the car starts to straighten out, steer accordingly so that it continues straight and in control.
 - Stopping on ice and snow is different than on dry pavement; just use a firm pressure on the pedal without pressing too hard.
 - DO NOT pump the brake pedal of a vehicle equipped with ABS (Automatic Braking System) brakes. The ABS brake system will automatically pump the brakes for you, faster than you can and stop the vehicle.
 - For cars without ABS, pumping the brakes is the most effective way to stop the car and maintain control. The brake pedal should be pumped rapidly enough that the wheels do not stop and remain locked up.
 - You must plan your stops ahead of time. Always be prepared to stop since stopping the car by pumping the brakes does require more time.

- If a blizzard traps you in your car:
 - Pull off the road, set hazard lights to flashing, and hang a distress flag from the radio aerial or window.
 - Remain in your vehicle; rescuers are most likely to find you there.
 - Conserve fuel, but run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm, cracking a downwind window slightly to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - In extreme cold, use available supplies to provide extra insulation and warmth.
 - Turn on the inside dome light so rescue teams can see you at night, but be careful not to run the battery down. In remote areas, spread a large cloth over the snow to attract the attention of rescue planes.
 - Do not set out on foot unless you see a building close by where you know you can take shelter.
 - Once the blizzard is over, you may need to leave the car and proceed on foot. Follow the road if possible. If you need to walk across open country, use distant points as landmarks to help keep your sense of direction.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and resource material developed by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service entitled “Winter Driving”